

much for your attendance. And again, to our honorees, thanks for setting such an extraordinary example for all of us. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-

Ng; Kurt Klein, husband of Gerda W. Klein; Elizabeth Little, wife of Tom Little; former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali; and former First Lady Barbara Bush. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Lt. Cmdr. John F. McCarthy, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President.

Statement on Serbian National Day *February 15, 2011*

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to all those who are observing Serbian National Day. The United States and Serbia share an important partnership based on mutual respect and shared goals. Here in

America, those of Serbian descent contribute to the fabric of American life. I look forward to a continued friendship between our two countries.

Remarks on the America's Great Outdoors Initiative *February 16, 2011*

Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. It is great to have you here. What better place to hold our Great Outdoors event than right here inside the East Room. *[Laughter]* We thought it might be a little chilly for some of you. Not the folks from Montana. *[Laughter]* Now, while an indoor celebration of the great outdoors may seem strange, it is worth noting that the White House is actually inside a 82-acre national park, including an area once found to have the "densest squirrel population known to science." *[Laughter]* This is true. So we've got that going for us. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Sally for the terrific introduction. I asked her if she brought me any gear. She said that Secret Service wouldn't let her, otherwise she would have. *[Laughter]*

I also want to make a couple of acknowledgements, people who have worked so hard on this initiative, and I want to make sure that they get all the credit in the world: my great Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, is here; my outstanding Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack. Tom's still recovering from the Super Bowl—big Steelers fan. *[Laughter]* Went

down to the game, all that stuff. Had the towel. *[Laughter]*

Administrator of the EPA, Lisa Jackson; Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Nancy Sutley; Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Jo-Ellen Darcy; and somebody I am just thrilled to have here because this is my model for public service and just—not only a great former Senator, but also just a class act and a wonderful gentleman, who I have not seen in a while, John Warner of the great Commonwealth of Virginia. Nice to see you, John. Thank you.

We also have—in addition to Sally, I want to make sure that everybody knows who's standing behind me here—Dusty Crary, who's a rancher from Rocky Mountain Front Advisory Committee—Dusty; Sam Solomon, the president and CEO of the Coleman Company; John Tomke, president, Sporting Conservation Council, Ducks Unlimited; Troy Uentillie, Navajo Nation member and the Sherman BIE School; and Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers. All these folks have just done a lot of work to make this day possible.

Now, in 1786, Thomas Jefferson described the view from Monticello. "How sublime to

look down into the workhouse of nature,” he wrote. “To see her clouds, hail, snow, rain, thunder, all fabricated at our feet.” To most Americans at the time, Jefferson’s experience was a familiar one. The vast majority of the continent was wilderness. No matter where you lived, you didn’t have to travel far to find acres of open fields and unspoiled forests.

But in the years that followed, Americans began to push westward. Cities sprang up along riverbanks and railroad tracks. The Nation grew so fast that by 1890, the Census Director announced that he could no longer identify an American frontier. And yet, in the midst of so much expansion, so much growth, so much progress, there were a few individuals who had the foresight to protect our most precious national treasures, even in our most trying times.

So at the height of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln agreed to set aside more than 60 square miles of land in the Yosemite Valley—land he had never seen—on the condition that it be preserved for public use. Teddy Roosevelt, of course, our greatest conservation President, wrote that “there is nothing more practical in the end than the preservation of beauty.” Even FDR, in the midst of the Great Depression, enabled the National Park Service to protect America’s most iconic landmarks, from Mount Rushmore to the Statue of Liberty. So conservation became not only important to America, but it became one of our greatest exports, as America’s beauty shone as a beacon to the world and other countries started adopting conservation measures because of the example that we had set.

Protecting this legacy has been the responsibility of all who serve this country. But behind that action, the action that’s been taken here in Washington, there’s also the story of ordinary Americans who devoted their lives to protecting the land that they loved.

That’s what Horace Kephart and George Masa did. This is a wonderful story. Two men, they met in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, each had moved there to start a new life. Horrified that their beloved wilderness was being clearcut at a rate of 60 acres a

day, Horace and George worked with other members of the community to get the land set aside. The only catch was that they had to raise \$10 million to foot the bill.

But far from being discouraged, they helped rally one of the poorest areas in the country to the cause. A local high school donated the proceeds from a junior class play. Preachers held “Smokey Mountain Sunday” services and encouraged their congregations to donate. Local businesses chipped in. And students from every grade in the city of Asheville—which was still segregated at the time—made a contribution.

So stories like these remind us what citizenship is all about. And by the way, last year, Michelle and I, we were able to walk some of the trails near Asheville and benefit from the foresight of people that had come before us. Our daughters, our sons were able to enjoy what not only Teddy Roosevelt did, but what ordinary folks did all across the country. It embodies that uniquely American idea that each of us has an equal share in the land around us and an equal responsibility to protect it.

And it’s not just the iconic mountains and parks that we protect. It’s the forests where generations of families have hiked and picnicked and connected with nature. It’s the park down the street where kids play after school. It’s the farmland that’s been in the family longer than anybody can remember. It’s the rivers where we fish; it’s the forests where we hunt.

These days, our lives are only getting more complicated, more busy. And we’re glued to our phones and our computers for hours on end. I have to—Michelle and I, we’re constantly having to monitor our kids. “Get outside. Turn off the TV. Put away the Skype.” [Laughter]

Cars and buses shuttle us from one place to another. We see our kids spending more and more time on the couch. For a lot of folks, it’s easy to go days without stepping on a single blade of grass.

At times like these, we have to ask ourselves: What can we do to break free from the routine and reconnect with the world around us? What can we do to get our kids off the couch and out

the door? And by the way, because I'm a smart husband, I here want to point out all the great things that Michelle is doing with the "Let's Move!" initiative to help kids stay active and healthy.

Today, our open spaces are more precious than ever, and it's more important than ever that we come together to protect them for the next generation.

So in my first months of office, I signed a public lands bill that many of you worked on that designated 2 million acres of wilderness, over 1,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, and three national parks. I'm very proud of that. And some of the Members of Congress who worked with us on that are here today, and we're very proud of them.

But at a time when America's open spaces are controlled by a patchwork of groups, from government to land trusts to private citizens, it's clear that conservation in the 21st century is going to take more than just what we can do here in Washington. Just like the story of the Great Smoky Mountains, meeting the new test of environmental stewardship means finding the best ideas at the grassroots level. It means helping States, communities, and nonprofits protect their own resources. And it means figuring out how the Federal Government can be a better partner in those efforts.

And that's why last year, we launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative. Over the last 10 months, members of my administration have held more than 50 listening sessions with over 10,000 people, from hunters and fishermen to tribal leaders and young people. And together, we've laid the foundation for a smarter, more community-driven environmental strategy.

To make it easier for families to spend time outside no matter where they live, we're going to work with cities and States to build and improve urban parks and waterways and make it easier to access public lands.

To encourage young people to put down the remote or the video games and get outside, we're going to establish a new Conservation Service Corps, so they can build a lifelong relationship with their natural heritage. And this is something I know Ken cares deeply about.

To help set aside land for conservation and to promote recreation, we're proposing to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund for only the third time in our history. And we're intending to pay for it with existing oil and gas revenues, because our attitude is, if you take something out of the Earth, you have a responsibility to give a little bit back to the Earth.

So these are the right steps to take for our environment. But they're also the right steps to take for our country. They help spur the economy. They create jobs by putting more Americans back to work in tourism and recreation. They help inspire a new generation of scientists to learn how the world works. They help Americans stay healthier by making it easier to spend time outside. And they'll help carry forth our legacy as a people who don't just make decisions based on short-term gains of any one group, but on what's best for the entire Nation in the long run.

So working together to protect the environment we share, lifting up the best ideas wherever we find them, preserving the great outdoors for our children and for their children, that's our responsibility.

The great Rachel Carson once wrote that "The real wealth of the Nation lies in the resources of the Earth: soil, water, forests, minerals, wildlife. . . . Their administration is not properly, and cannot be, a matter of politics." Something more than politics, that was the call echoed by Jefferson and Lincoln and Roosevelt. It's the call that has driven generations of Americans to do their part to protect a small slice of the planet. And it's the call that we answer today.

So I'm grateful to all of you for the great work that you've already done. Keep it up. Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sarah M.R. "Sally" Jewell, president and chief executive officer, Recreational Equipment, Inc.; and John Tomke, Chair, Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Con-

servation Council (formerly the Sporting Conservation Council) and former president

of the conservation organization Ducks Unlimited.

Statement on Lithuanian National Day *February 16, 2011*

I send my best wishes to all those who are observing Lithuania's national day. Lithuanians have inspired the world by building a vibrant democracy and free market economy. Here in America, those who trace their roots to Lithua-

nia have enriched all walks of our national life. As close allies, the United States and Lithuania have an unwavering commitment to our common security, and our partnership will only grow stronger in the years to come.

Statement on Kosovo Independence Day *February 17, 2011*

I join all Americans in extending my best wishes to all those who are celebrating Kosovo's Independence Day. This is a time both to reflect upon Kosovo's long struggle for independence and to look forward to a future of greater security and prosperity for all of Koso-

vo's citizens. In America, those who have roots and family in Kosovo can be proud of the tremendous progress the country has made in its first 3 years of independence. I am confident that the friendship between our nations will continue to grow in the years ahead.

Remarks at Intel Corporation in Hillsboro, Oregon *February 18, 2011*

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Thank you so much. I am thrilled to be here. I want to first of all thank Paul for that introduction, and I want to thank Paul for agreeing to be part of our administration's new Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. I look forward to our continuing conversations when we meet next week.

I also want to acknowledge a wonderful Governor, Governor Kitzhaber, who's here. Thank you so much for all the work that you're doing. And the mayor of Hillsboro, Jerry Wiley, thank you for the great work that you do.

And I want to thank everybody here at Intel for hosting us here today. We just had a amazing tour. One of my staff, he said, "It's like magic." [*Laughter*] He did. That's what he said. [*Laughter*]

I had a chance to see everything from an electron microscope to the inside of your microprocessor facility, the clean room. And I have to say, for all the gadgets you've got here,

what actually most impressed me were the students and the science projects that I just had a chance to see. It gave them a chance to talk about things like quantum ternary algorithms—[*laughter*—and it gave me a chance to nod my head and pretend that I understood what they were talking about. [*Laughter*]

So that was the high school guys. Then we went over to—[*laughter*—seriously. Then we went over to meet some seventh graders, six girls, and it was wonderful that—all girls—who had started a science program after school that—it involved Legos. So I'm thinking, now this is more my speed. [*Laughter*] All right? I used to build some pretty mean Lego towers when I was a kid. [*Laughter*] I thought I could participate. Only these students used their Legos to build models—to build robots that were programmable to model brains that could repair broken bones. So I guess that's different than towers. [*Laughter*] It's not as good—[*laughter*—the towers. [*Laughter*]